

# Frequently Asked Questions About New Identification Requirements for Sheep and Goats

## Q. When does this regulation go into effect?

A. The regulation went into effect on November 19, 2001, for sheep and goats not known to be exposed to scrapie.

## Q. Why do I have to do this?

A. It is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) goal to eradicate scrapie in the United States to minimize ongoing losses to the sheep industry. To eradicate scrapie, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service must be able to trace scrapie-infected animals back to their flock of birth or origin.

## Q. What is scrapie?

A. Scrapie is a fatal degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats. Clinical signs include changes in behavior or temperament, scratching and rubbing against fixed objects, weight loss, loss of coordination, lip smacking, and gait abnormalities. The presence of scrapie in the United States is a major obstacle to establishing new export markets for sheep and sheep products.

## Q. Which animals will need identification (ID) tags?

A. All breeding sheep and sheep over 18 months of age need to be officially identified before they enter into interstate commerce.

Additional situations requiring official ID are as follows:

- Cull ewes and rams sold to livestock markets or dealers are considered to be in interstate commerce. USDA recommends owners place official ID on these animals before they leave the farm so that animals can be traced back to a specific farm if needed. Additionally, markets may charge for their time to keep additional records and to apply ID if sheep are not properly identified when received.

- All sexually intact sheep of any age going to any show, demonstration, or exhibition "out-of-State," or any "in-State" show, demonstration, or exhibition where sheep from another State might be on site.
- Breeding animals sold "out-of-State" or sold at sales/markets/auctions "in-State" that handle animals in interstate commerce. It is even a good idea to identify breeding animals sold "in-State," as the purchaser will not be able to sell the animal "out-of-State" if it was born after January 1, 2002, if it was not identified to the flock of birth.

Goats that must be identified for interstate sale or show or movement are as follows:

- Sexually intact registered goats and goats used primarily for milk production or sold for breeding or exhibition. Note: Legible registration tattoos are acceptable for ID when the goats are accompanied by their registration certificate or the registration numbers and registry are listed on a certificate of veterinary inspection.
- Any other sexually intact goats that have resided on the same premises as sheep.

There are additional identification requirements for animals exposed to scrapie. These "exposed" sheep must be officially identified by September 20, 2001.

## Q. Where do you get the official ID tags?

A. First, call APHIS' Veterinary Services (VS) office at this toll free number 1-866-873-2824 (1-866-USDA-TAG). This office will assign you an official flock ID and provide USDA tags.

## Q. What is the cost of the tags and what do they look like?

A. USDA provides two types of official tags free of charge. There is a white metal tag and a white plastic tag. Producers that order these free tags during the next year will also receive one pair of tag pliers free of charge with their first order. Additional pliers may be purchased directly from the company if desired. If you do not care for either of these, additional official tags can be ordered at a cost to you. Please ask for information on these tags when you call USDA. You need an official flock ID, issued by the USDA, prior to ordering these tags.

**Q. How many tags should I order?**

**A.** You should order enough tags to identify any breeding sheep or cull sheep that will be sold over the next 2 to 3 years.

**Q. Can registered tattoos be used to meet USDA's identification requirements?**

**A.** Yes, legible individual registry tattoos issued by breed associations may also be used as official identification. Your assigned tattoo prefix should be registered with your local USDA, APHIS, VS office using the enclosed form.

**Q. What do I do when selling an animal that is required to be identified?**

**A.** When selling a sheep or goat that is required to be identified, the animal must be identified to the flock in which they were last used for breeding or were born. You can do this by applying your USDA-assigned tags to the animals and providing the purchaser with an owner statement and retaining a copy for yourself. You may use the enclosed owner statement for this purpose. If you are selling animals for slaughter only, be sure to tell the market and write "for slaughter only," on the owner statement. Animals sold for breeding must have a certificate of veterinary inspection from an accredited veterinarian. Animals born after January 1, 2002, must be identified to their flock of birth.

If the animal is identified with flock-of-origin assigned ID you may use the premises identification number; however, when it is practical to do so, recording their full ID (flock number plus individual animal number) is recommended.

A copy of this record should always go with each animal and you should keep a copy. Remember, the goal is to know both the flock into which an animal was born and any flocks in which the animal resided after birth. This is to determine the origin of scrapie and eradicate it if an infected animal is found.

**Q. What if I buy sheep or goats that are required to be identified?**

**A.** The easiest thing to do is to request that the seller identify the animals and provide an owner statement (see attached sample). The owner statement has all the information you are required to keep. If the seller does not provide an owner statement, you will need to read and record all the tags, the number of animals purchased, the breeds, the date purchased, and the name, address and phone number of the person who sold them to you.

**Q. What do I do when I sell one of these "purchased animals"?**

**A.** If the animal was not used for breeding purposes while in your ownership, you should provide a copy of the owner statement you received when you purchased the animal to the new buyer.

If you used the animal for breeding purposes, you should provide the purchaser with your own owner statement.

**Q. How long do I need to keep records?**

**A.** Records must be kept for at least 5 years from the date the animal was transported or sold.

**Q. I purchased an animal with an official ID already on it, do I need to retag it?**

**A.** Never remove any official ID. You can add your own official ID if you wish. Again, there must be a combination of ID and records that will allow USDA to trace a scrapie-infected animal to the flock of birth and any flock(s) in which the animal has resided for breeding purposes.

**Q. My neighbor needs to ID some sheep and has no tags. Should I lend her/him some of mine?**

**A.** No. USDA assigns flock numbers to each flock. Unique flock ID ensures that any traces involving flock ID will be traced to a single flock.

**Q. Is this part of USDA's Scrapie Flock Certification Program?**

**A.** No. The Scrapie Flock Certification Program is a different program available to producers who wish to take additional actions that will allow their flocks to be certified as being free of scrapie.

**Q. Will the ID tags used in Scrapie Flock Certification Program satisfy the requirements of this new regulation?**

**A.** Yes.

**Q. What is the Scrapie Flock Certification Program?**

**A.** The Scrapie Flock Certification Program is a voluntary USDA program to identify flocks that are free of scrapie. The purpose of the certification program is to provide producers a source of replacement animals from flocks which are monitored for signs of scrapie. Owners of participating flocks must officially identify all animals over 1 year of age with an official tamper-proof eartag, maintain required records, and agree to immediately report animals suspected of having scrapie. Please contact the USDA, APHIS, VS office for more information or check out the web site (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs>)

Call 515-284-4140 if you have any questions or  
go to the Internet at  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/scrapie/> or  
<http://www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie>.

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